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Washington





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AN  
ORATION,  
DELIVERED AT  
WASHINGTON-HALL,  
FEBRUARY 22, 1814.  
BEFORE THE  
Washington Benevolent Society,  
OF THE  
CITY OF NEW-YORK,  
IN COMMEMORATION OF THE NATIVITY OF  
GEORGE WASHINGTON.

BY H. W. WARNER, ESQ.

NEW-YORK:  
PUBLISHED FOR THE SOCIETY.

FROM THE PRESS OF B. GARDENIER, NO. 34 CEDAR-STREET.

1814.

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DELIVERED AT

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*AT a meeting of the Washington Benevolent Society,  
Wednesday evening, February 23, 1814, the follow-  
ing resolutions were unanimously agreed to:*

*RESOLVED, That the thanks of this Society be pre-  
sented to HENRY W. WARNER, Esq. for his eloquent  
and impressive oration, delivered on the 22d instant,  
and that he be requested to furnish a copy of it for  
publication:*

*RESOLVED, That Caleb S. Riggs, George Brincker-  
hoff, and Beal N. Lewis, Esqrs. be a committee to  
carry the above resolution into effect, and to superintend  
the publication.*

*A copy from the Minutes.*

**ISAAC M. ELY, Secretary.**



## ORATION, &c.

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FELLOW CITIZENS,

WE have met to celebrate the memory of a great and good man. Some of us have seen him, and all have heard our fathers speak of him. The story of his virtues was the lesson of our infancy; and if we were not degenerate children, we have wept over it before we had language for our feelings. He was one of those extraordinary beings whom the Almighty sometimes sets before mankind in their emergencies, at once to deliver nations, and to exemplify the dignity to which our nature may aspire. Born while these states were yet colonies, and passing with them through all the changes which their political relations have undergone, he found, in the progress of his life, a series of great occasions for the exertion of his talents; occasions that seemed to call for more than human conduct; and, with a good fortune which it were impious to ascribe to accident, he satisfied them all. He was, if ever man deserved that praise, the father of his country.

But I do not mean to dwell upon his character. It is a theme too proud for these disastrous days. I rather choose to consider with what fidelity we have kept the heritage that he left us, and whether we are likely to maintain it. Such are become the circum-

stances of the world, that it behooves creatures who know as little of what is to be as they lately anticipated of what now is, to look about them for the means of keeping society in existence, instead of losing themselves in amusements to which its security might invite. For one, I feel myself driven from the glorious visions of the past, and I sink, humbled and astonished, upon the present and the future. Where are we? and whither are we tending? How long will there be any thing in our institutions to remind us of WASHINGTON? They are descended from him; once they were impressed with his image; and it seems to have been only in them, and in the blessings of which he hoped they were to yield a lasting exuberance, that he desired to be remembered. To be the instrument of establishing and securing our liberties, was the one ambition which he could not conceal, and to which his life was consecrated. But he is dead; and I turn, with filial duty, to inquire whether he lived in vain.

Those of our countrymen who expect to spend their days under the safeguard of the federal constitution, and then to transmit it, unimpaired, down a long line of posterity, appear to found their expectation, chiefly, on the freedom and liberality of character by which it is so strongly recommended to our self-love; on the extensive variety of soils and climates which it unites, and which tend to render us independent of other nations; on our geographical position, remote from foreign violence and corruption; and, on the enlightened virtue of the people. These are specious grounds. I wish they may not disappoint the trust they have allured. Look at

them; try them; and judge of the probabilities. I will trouble you with only a few brief hints; and then, a remark or two by way of practical result.

Our government is, indeed, free; its theory is delightful beyond comparison; and we have seen it operate, too, with the finest effect: but, like others of the same general description, it rests upon popular sentiment, which is ever variable. Of course, it cannot long outlast the general intelligence, much less the integrity, of the great body of the citizens. But is it reasonable to presume that a whole commonwealth will permanently continue honest and enlightened? I am afraid there is in the very nature of every free state, as there is in the nature of man, a seed of death. A vast proportion of the people must always be poor, and I think I may add that an equal proportion will always be ignorant. These are therefore disabled, by their inevitable condition, to act with a steady view to the political bearings of their conduct. They have neither leisure nor ability to consult national policy at all. Obligated to confine their attention to what is immediately before them, and incapable of comparing what is done with what is right or practicable in the general management of affairs, they borrow, instead of forming opinions, they fall under the influence of wicked men, they decide without knowing why, they change with the wind. Nor can this be wholly prevented.

Some persons have pleased themselves with that splendid figment of the brain, a *perfect republic*; in which the citizens at large might discern such an entire coincidence of private and public interests as to need no legal constraint. The French economists

endeavoured to realize this chimera, by conjuration with another, the *goddess of reason*. They took for granted, that the people were reasonable beings, who had been grievously slandered, and could not possibly be unsafe depositaries of any trust which only required the exercise of that faculty which has been said chiefly to distinguish man from brute. They therefore ventured to cast off the obligations of religion and of law, those cumbrous relics of the middle ages; and having swept every thing but *reason* and *philosophy* from the stage, they dreamed of attainments not conceded to humanity, and acted over again the tragedy of the first transgressor. If you will take their own testimony for it, they really believed that they were about to strip the veil from the never before revealed elements of political science. But mark the sequel. The liberties of France have been consumed. And happy will it be for us, if events shall not prove that our funeral pyre has been lighted from the blaze of hers.

What has happened in one country, however, may, and in like circumstances, probably will, happen in another. God only knows how many suns shall roll their revolutions, before the seventh phial of political wo shall be poured upon *our* heads. We have heard that liberty is an inalienable right. It may be so; but I believe there is no commodity in which men speculate more wildly. Hence that unquestionable fact in history, that free states are of all the most fluctuating and short-lived. Schemes that look only to public happiness on paper, are speedily abused to public ruin in practice. The wisest law-giver of ancient Greece was unable, with all his per-

sonal influence in aid of his system, to maintain a republican government even in Attica, a small compact territory, and a most enlightened people, for half a score of years. We have endured longer. And why? Because our liberties were the purchase of a struggle, the severity of which is not *yet* quite forgotten; because the puritanical virtues of our ancestry, lingering and reluctant in their retreat, have not entirely withdrawn their vestiges from among us; because the extent of our lands has hitherto afforded range for the restless and the profligate to dissipate their corruption in the pursuits of avarice. Here is the secret of the marvel that we have lived so long.

But circumstance is every thing in politics. While some of the causes, to which we are indebted for our preservation, have been dying away, others have assumed a new character, and are now threatening to destroy us. We have added field to field; we have purchased Louisiana, seized upon one of the Floridas, and abetted insurrection in the other, with a view to its ulterior subjugation; we have invaded the lonely retreats of the unhappy savages, and laid their towns, miserable, indeed, but such as they had, in ashes; in violation of the sacred faith of treaty, without a colour of justice or excuse, against conscience, against the crying deprecations of pity, against the authority of heaven, have we dared to wrap ourselves in the mantle of night, to penetrate the cheerless haunts of barbarism, to surprise the sleep of the desert, to make the wilderness more wild, by staining it with the blood of its sons and its daughters, by filling it with the scream of murder,

by erecting a *christian* flag upon the pile of the slain. This, all this, we have done—and it has been called “*doing the thing in style!*”—to glut our ambition of empire. The same ruthless motive has actuated half the nation in our aggressions upon Canada. What! have we not domain enough already? Had we not too much before we made a purchase, or an attempt at conquest? Common sense might discover, that, although a wide expanse of territory may be favourable to the early growth of a state, it only requires to be covered with inhabitants, to render it a source of danger. Government is constraint. Men will not patiently submit to it beyond the requisition of obvious policy. Be it ever so just, ever so free, ever so beneficial, they must be near enough to see the point from which their good radiates. If they do not *perceive* that their interests are cherished, and that they get a clear, substantial equivalent in exchange for their obedience, they will assuredly seek the chance of a better dynasty, as soon as they can safely deny their allegiance to the old. Even in those days, when commerce had scarcely an existence, and human habits and pursuits, being nearly the same in all countries, opposed fewer obstacles to the application of general rules of empire than at present, it was found impossible to hold very extensive territories subject to one political head, without rendering the connexion odious to some of the parts. The progress of wealth and of civilization has supplied individuals, and all the classes and subdivisions of community with more to lose; but it has neither made them less unwilling to sustain the loss, nor less jealous of the authority, whose maintenance, dignity

or force commands it. On the contrary, there is a great deal more of selfishness now in the world than formerly. National spirit has been ebbing for ages; and mankind have bartered away their chivalry for gold. Every thing wears a new aspect. The old, sage-like, and dignified inquiry, "What good?" has been paraphrased into the sordid, mean interrogation, "How much money?" and over the whole host of the passions is enthroned that modern upstart, the love of lucre. Hence the universal and astonishing enterprise of recent times. Hence, too, have resulted, endless variety of occupations and views; innumerable diversities of interest among the people; conflicting claims upon government, and general weakness in the state. Do you wish an example? You have it at home. The American people are, beyond dispute, the most avaricious, the most enterprising, and the most distracted political combination of men on earth. Whether their union be strong enough to hold them together, posterity will know.

But we have been told, that, situated as we are, on this side of the Atlantic, beyond the infection of European plagues, we have no reason to fear that the health or soundness of the body politic can ever be endangered by its magnitude. More than one administration have given lamentable proof of their acquiescence in this doctrine. Gentlemen, it is a doctrine which you and I may live to see refuted, in a way more decisive than argument. It is founded in a false assumption; we are not beyond the reach of the contagion of Europe; and of this, too, we have melancholy proof. Our situation only secures us against European *violence*. That is all. Nor is the

advantage of that itself very obvious. We become careless of ourselves, in proportion as we are fearless of others. Americans have too much political leisure. If we were hemmed in on every side by foreign nations, we should be compelled to think, to feel and to act, with a view to the preservation of our own. In the absence of such external pressure, the citizen sinks into the individual; we give our attention almost wholly to the study and promotion of interests peculiar to our own private concerns, or at best, to those parts of the country which we respectively inhabit; and thus, every thing that was ever national among us, is gradually giving way to partial attachment and provincial bias. The work has already gone too far to be easily controlled. Many causes unite to forward it. The hand of nature has itself widely divided us in climate, soil, and other local aptitudes, which, though they may weaken our dependence on foreign resources, indubitably lead to distraction at home; and the time seems not far distant, when all resemblance of character, and I am afraid, all kindness and charity of sentiment, between our great eastern, western, and southern geographical departments, will be extinct. What is there in New-England even now, that has its likeness in the slave states of the south? The country beyond the *Alleghany* has been more recently settled. But when you consider that it is separated from you by a *Chinese* wall, that you are likely to have but little intercourse with it, and, of course, but little opportunity to cultivate union by a mutual interchange of good offices; you have no ground to expect that the jealous and insidious hostility which it

has already betrayed in relation to the commercial states, will ever ripen into friendship. Heretofore, while it was yet a desert region, sought only by such of our citizens as we could better spare than keep, there may have been some advantage in our title to it. Allowed. The advantage would have been just the same, had our rights extended to the western ocean. It was a resort for adventurers; it was a receptacle for impurity; it served as a kind of *Botany Bay*. But the *Ohio* and the *Mississippi* have ceased to be rivers of the wilderness. State after state has risen upon their banks, and claimed and received the honours of federal equality with yourselves. Do you remember how, as they rose, you fell? But this was not enough. To accelerate your degradation in the scale, a Spanish province, having no better recommendation than *French* ethics and *French* politics, has been bought into the fraternity; and you are doomed to behold a sister in a hag that offends the eye. Is this a connexion that will last, and grow strong with age? You have had your constitution interpreted for you by persons who had no dwelling place within the legitimate limits of its authority. You have seen your commerce at the cruel mercy of legislators who cared as little for its prosperity as they knew of the principles by which it ought to be regulated. Under colour of avenging *your seamen's rights*, you have beheld your brothers and your sons conscribed for slaughter by men who never saw the sea. Is it possible that such a state of things can endure? The evil is becoming more and more aggravated every day we live. The balance of your government has been pushed from its equipoise, and

the states that gave it existence are hourly going to the beam. And this is constitutional! What! to steal the constitution from the children of its authors? What! to commit the *sacred ark* to the custody of *Gentiles*? Suppose the thirteen old United States were put in endless pawn and bankruptcy to buy out the whole American continent; and then, to meet the exigencies of so vast and magnificent a republic, suppose the seat of your government were transferred to *Darien*, where the spire of the palace might at once command the *Atlantic* and the *Pacific* main: this, too, would, I conjecture, be alike in the liberal and magnanimous spirit of the constitution. It is no jest. The centre of empire is travelling to the west and south; and, (*heu, nescia mens hominum futuri!*) mortal cannot tell how long the passing boatman of the *Polomac* shall hear of courts, and senates, and the pomp of legislation on its border.

But upon this dark and comfortless view of things let us drop the curtain. There is yet one resource, the virtue of the people. Here good and wise men have reposed their confidence for the salvation of our liberties. It would seem, at first thought, that they have done so with reason. The people are they from whom all authority in government is derived, for whom it should be exercised, and upon whom the evils of its abuses fall. As such, one would think, they must abhor whatever appears hostile to the permanent well-being of the commonwealth. It is in their veins that every pulse of the public fortune beats. Surely they cannot fall in love with wretchedness and ruin. Surely they will, in due season, redress our grievances and pacify our fears.

Gentlemen, if the mass of mankind were not in necessary bondage to their immediate personal wants; if the rich were not generally forgetful that their stores are staked upon the fidelity with which they discharge their political duties; if a correct judgment of public measures were not, for the most part, impracticable without much information and study; if there were no wicked men to deceive, and no ignorant men to become victims of deception; if history had not uttered her appalling voice; if our own experience had not echoed the alarm of history; if the fierce anger of the Almighty were not at this moment burning up the land before our faces: then would I cheerfully take theory for fact; then, with a heart at ease, with a complacency which now retreats before me and eludes my pursuit, would I yield our darling constitution to the virtue of the people. But how are realities? I readily concede that our destinies are in the hands of the people, and that if they do not save us, we are lost. There is no alternative. But will the people do their duty? It can afford but little consolation to a sick man, to know that there is in the compass of nature a specific for the cure of his malady, unless he have reason to hope that it will be applied. Look abroad upon the country: Has not the popular sentiment itself become corrupt? Is there not poison in the very fountain, from which all our healing waters are to flow?

The danger of free states, and of ours among the rest, is twofold. On one hand, the general tendency of things is towards license, anarchy and revolution; and, on the other, ambitious individuals, taking

advantage of the facilities which the unruly progress of this tendency affords, are prone to gather up the reins of empire and to attempt despotism. The duty of the people follows their danger into its branches, and requires them to keep an equally jealous guard upon themselves and upon their rulers. Are we doing this? So far from it, we seem to have done troubling ourselves with duty altogether. No; the men who are now standing upon our heads took special care to seal our eyes as they ascended; and so we neither look above nor about us, neither scrutinize their conduct nor our own. We are in a sort of mental eclipse, that flings the shade of passion upon every object. A vast proportion of us, fully persuaded that the rulers of their choice can do no wrong, and equally satisfied that those who think differently can do nothing else, have resigned themselves to the most indiscriminate approbation and support of whatever tends to aggrandize the former, or to destroy the latter. The minority, of course, are capable of suffering, and therefore *turn* when they are trampled on. Hence, the land is divided between angry parties, respectively occupied in the persecution and resistance of each other; and we now exhibit the singular, though not unexampled appearance, of a country, in which the bonds of union are strained to the very utmost they will bear, and on the point of bursting asunder; while at the same time, a few incompetent, but sufficiently artful and unprincipled men, availing themselves of the confusion of the contest, are endeavouring to fortify, and, if possible, to perpetuate their dominion, by throwing ligaments of tyranny

around the people's necks. As, however, we seem not fully ripe for universal submission and implicit obedience, the views of usurpers are likely to fail, and the rudeness of the efforts that are made to execute them, promise only to drive us with the greater speed into the other, and scarcely less deplorable extremity, of civil broil and distraction. This is rendered more probable by the local distinctions which our party zeal has taken up. Already do we behold the great geographical departments of the commonwealth arrayed in mutual hostility, denouncing each other, speaking familiarly of separation, and apparently verging to that catastrophe. What is peculiarly unfortunate, government itself has, in some degree, become an instrument of local feeling, and thus contributes to exasperate the quarrel. The operation of many of its measures is exceedingly partial and oppressive. It is notorious, that our commercial states have been theatres of slavery these seven years past. The means of daily bread have been abolished in them, and, for aught that appears, abolished never to be restored. A system of policy, which might defy all the power of British monarchy to maintain for a single twelve-month upon British soil, is to be the life-allotment of us, facile republicans, and the inheritance of our children. Indeed? Preposterous! It cannot be. Oppression will find that patience has a limit, and despair a recoil. If we be not relieved, we may soon be convulsed. You have witnessed the lengths to which New-England has already been impelled by real suffering; and you have heard the laugh of derision and of merriment, which her calamities

have excited in the west! I ask, is there no harm in this? Will no ill consequence grow out of it? The hope of peace is, indeed, beguiling the present hour; but in what a fearful suspense are our destinies hung, while ministers are settling the question, whether the olive tree shall be replanted or cast into the fire! Are you quite sure that a rash decision of that question may not involve the wreck of the federal union? Rely upon it, the time is at hand, when the shackles which bind the constitutional liberties of the country, must either be taken off, or they will be broken. Have you considered that the spirit is not dead, which scattered the British teas upon the ocean? Do you remark the living efficacy which that lofty spirit still exerts in the land of its favourite abode? Alas, it is of little profit, in our day, to talk about prudential considerations of any sort. The mass of the people have long since bid adieu to them. Else had we never banished the disciples of WASHINGTON from our employment; else had we never bowed the knee to men who "know not God, and obey not the gospel;" else had we never thrown away our commerce; else had we never dreamed of territorial acquisitions; else had we never gone to war "with a lie in our right hand." Say not that administration alone are chargeable with the public misfortunes. With impious temerity, indeed, do they affect to "ride in the whirlwind, and direct the storm;" but let me tell you, that without assurance of popular support, they dare not thus offend. No: it is the people; it is the people, that have lost their reason, that have forgotten justice, that have sunk the nation in a

party, that have commenced a warfare upon an unoffending portion of themselves. And who can answer for the issue? Suppose them only deluded; may not madness work mischief without the help of depravity?

A strong and malignant delusion has indeed spread its baleful wings over us. The community are spell-bound; write for them—they are blind; cry aloud—they are deaf; not a sense does its office; information is shut out; argument is denied access; passion and frenzy stop up every avenue to the understanding. The public mind is absolutely insane. Official acts are vehemently applauded or condemned, without the slightest attention to any thing but their party origin. Even candidates for high and delicate trusts in the government, selected by the most iniquitous rules of preference, are voted for with a careless, mechanical promptitude becoming beasts of burden; with an inconsiderate, blindfold, rash alacrity, that makes one

“ ————— blush,

And hang his head, to think himself a *man*.”

Yes, election itself, the proudest boast of freemen, and the distinguishing prerogative of their exalted order; the thing, too, which is of all the most momentous and decisive in its influence upon the value, and upon the existence of republican institutions; has become a farce, a paltry farce, in which the *sovereign people* are content to appear the insignificant and contemptible puppets of corruption, playing as they are bidden, for the advancement of plots which they do not understand. I speak what you have seen.

Nor may we console ourselves with the conviction that there is nothing worse than delusion, bad as this is, among us. Mistake alone would not defy correction. The evil has sunk deeper. We have immense numbers of individuals, and some whole sections of country, that are grievously *depraved*; that neither wish to be set right, nor regard the obligation of rectitude when they know it. What can be done with these? Will you address yourselves to their political morality? The time for such appeals is gone by. They have no morality of any kind. They even ridicule the little scrupulous virtue that remains to attract their notice. Piety itself, with them, is either superstition or hypocrisy; and conscience is the bugbear of a nurse's tale. I repeat it; we have whole districts, that are covered with such miscreant population; where there is scarcely a place of worship to be seen, and where the sabbath is only distinguished as a day of extraordinary vice and dissipation. Can you wonder, then, that the maxims of WASHINGTON freeze upon the lip? Do you expect political integrity where you find no other kindred trait? And this integrity gone, what becomes of your republican institutions? Every other consideration apart, can you presume upon their safety in a land where the moral sense imposes no constraint, religion is called priestcraft, and infidelity has more votaries than the God of Heaven?

But perhaps it is hoped that the people will grow wiser and better with the lapse of time. This is rather to be wished than expected. Neither past experience nor our acquaintance with existing in-

fluences will justify the hope. Remember that your newspapers, the common medium of political instruction, are many of them under the direction of foreigners, and still more in the hands of unprincipled natives. Accordingly, we know that the American press abounds in nearly all the enormities of doctrine and of sentiment, that prepared the ruin of France. Have you any doubt whether like causes tend to like effects? Or do you trust that as corruption has hitherto been less audacious here than on the other side of the water, it is therefore never to put on a bolder face? Take care of your confidence. Had we been as old and as populous a country as France, we should have followed her career with a less unequal step. We have a great deal of the same philosophy, the same politics, and the same morality. We were inoculated when her malady was ripe. It may not be so long as we desire before we go after her to the tomb.

There is another evil among us, nearly connected with that of a perverted press, and of equally dangerous influence upon the public mind. I speak of demagogues. These are a pestilent race of beings, of whose characters you need not be informed. They are, by trade, deceivers. They talk incessantly of *liberty*, *equality*, and the *rights of man*! Charming words indeed, but words which, in their mouths, mean alike any thing, or nothing, and therefore serve all occasions. They are a set of false-hearted sycophants, who deify the people in *form* while they endeavour to annihilate them in *fact*; and who speak of the popular voice with the profane adulation that was once fatally addressed to

royal ears, proclaiming it "*the voice of a God*," at the very moment that they are designing, what was then performed by a destroying angel, to silence it for ever. You know them well. You know the authority which, wicked as they are, they sway over the credulity of ignorant minds. You know the daring conspiracy in which myriads of them have struck their guilty hands, against the pristine spirit of the federal constitution. Yet they call themselves republicans, the exclusive republicans, the only friends of freedom and mankind. In point of fact, freedom has no worse enemy, and mankind but one.

Imagine, now, a state, whose institutions are all democratical in theory, and in their operation leveling alike to merit and to property; a state, with territories so extensive that the remoter parts are not likely to be cherished, either in their interests or their feelings, by the government; a state comprehending various soils, embracing various climates, inviting its inhabitants to various pursuits, and thus giving birth to a multitude of distinctions and diversified peculiarities of habit, prejudice and character; a state, which, to the other evils commonly attending great extent, adds the conspiring and still more dangerous one, of being divided by nature into three large sections of nearly equal importance, and between which, as there are many obstacles and few inducements to much friendly communication, local jealousies are inevitable; a state, given up, by its geographical position on the globe, to the full, unchecked and unremitting influence of its own internal destructives; a popular state,

abounding in popular delusion beyond the hope of remedy; a state, too, which is labouring with the malignant disease of vice and impiety, and which, in the midst of the nauseating process of its suppuration, while its youthful body is covered over with "putrifying sores," looks not to skill for relief, nor to virtue for the restoration of its beauty; a decaying state, whose physicians are impostors, practising without degree or license, offering themselves before they are called, and using daggers for lancets: imagine such a state, and ask your sober judgment whether all be safe; whether it be pusillanimous to look for disaster; whether there be more of manly confidence, or of childish imbecility, in counting upon any thing but disaster, but ruin. And is this a fancy-piece? Has it no resemblance under the sun? I wish, indeed, that the colouring may be thought too strong for a portraiture of ourselves; but I am afraid the outlines have too much truth to be mistaken.

How is it then, that we are tantalized with assurances that we shall live forever? At what shrine have our political diviners caught the oracle, that republics never perish? Did they find it in history? O, no. Have they conversed with the genius of the ancient sages? Into the very theory of the noblest of their commonwealths entered explicit provision for the case of its overthrow. Have they learnt from wiser men of later times? How different was the conviction of our illustrious legislator, our revered political father, our own WASHINGTON! The only fear he ever knew was for the safety of his country. Or, think you, did HAMILTON teach

them? Ask the awful monument on the Jersey shore! No: his prophetic spirit mourned over the approaching calamities of his native land, till he forgot his family and himself. He saw emergencies to come, from which no common arm would be able to redeem, and which he therefore felt a sacred obligation to meet, with powers unimpeded by any suspicion of his courage to use them. It was to his apprehensions for his country that the sacrifice was offered, when HAMILTON, the brave, the virtuous, the profound, HAMILTON, at that time the solar light in our firmament, fell at the feet of the foe.

My friends, there was a time, when WASHINGTON, and HAMILTON, and other kindred names now consecrated to memory, were on the list of our statesmen. Glorious years, adieu! We admire—and we mourn. All things beneath the skies are transitory. Think of what we *were*! And will you not also suffer your minds to pass down the current to the dreadful secret of what we most inevitably *shall be*? The continual change which has marked our progress hitherto, and is still passing upon the several circumstances of our condition, is calculated to remind us not only of the radiant point where our career began, but of that other and more interesting attribute of time, an end. Had we no better evidence of the brevity of our individual lives, the process of personal change, that every one of us is daily undergoing, would probably help us to the conclusion, that we neither have been, nor shall continue long in the world. At any rate, it serves us now as a constant and heart-touching remembrancer of the fact. Waking, as from a dream, we

look backward and forward, and either way discern a limit of vision. In the past, we behold ourselves starting into animated form; in the future, casting the slough, and entering a region which we have not explored. The retrospect, if we dwell upon it, unfolds a scene of more variety than any landscape; and not less affecting than various; because we recognize, in all its parts, the vicissitudes of our experience. On the other hand, the dim prospect that stretches out before us, excites a less turbulent, but still deeper interest; and we feel the heart prematurely dying within the bosom, while we bend the aching eye upon that point in our horizon, where the sun goes down, and the light of terrestrial being is extinguished.

Man, however, is not the only subject of change. States, too, have their nativity, their childhood, their manhood, their decrepitude and death. If not, in general, so shortlived as the individuals that compose them, they are as surely mortal. Where are the states of antiquity? Who can point us to the earth-covering empires of the *Greek* and the *Roman*? You will find them only in story; they are "a tale that is told." And what are we? Will the day never come, when our name shall be a thing of tradition, and these *United States* exist only in the mouths of men? May we, indeed, promise ourselves a duration, of which the vain experiments of six thousand years teach us only to despair? In what happy singularity of our system do we trace the redeeming principle? Shall we say, that as we have not risen from the same sickly beginning as other states, we shall therefore never come to the

same miserable end! Because, like Adam, we were created in the maturity of our powers and the fullness of our stature, may we do ourselves the compliment to think, that like him, too, we were formed for immortality? Alas, that we should have resembled him less in the *commencement*, than in the *progress* of being! No: we are fallen; in religion, in morals, in politics, in general condition, in substantial dignity, in self-respect, in the estimation of the world,

“ ————— into what pit —————  
From what height fallen! ————— ”

I appeal to your own observation and experience. The proof is crushing you into the dust. You know and you *feel*, that a malediction has lighted upon us. You know and you *feel*, that the government of your country has ceased to answer the great ends of its institution. The land is under curse. The fields over which the standard of WASHINGTON but lately waved in triumph, the ground that drank the blood of your fathers, and now covers their bones, has been made the scene of your misfortune, your degradation and your shame. See, then, if you can derive any consolation from the glories of the past. Is it praise, or is it intolerable ignominy, to be called degenerate sons of noble ancestors? What is it to us, that there *was* a golden age? WASHINGTON is no more—and we have already seen the age of brass, and the age of iron.

Gentlemen, we are at war. To hasten the progress of our change, to complete the climax of our follies, and our sufferings; to put every thing in instant jeopardy by a single desperate adventure,

we have declared offensive hostilities against the only remaining christian state beneath the cope of heaven. On what grounds? No matter now, for they are long since done away. Yet we go on; yet we continue the debate of blood. Is there any pretence for this? Yes; *Britain*, proud, boastful, overbearing *Britain*, presumes to claim the services of her native subjects found upon the high seas. No more? O, fie! Such a pretence should paralyze the tongue that utters it. And this is all that we are fighting for! Can you believe it? What! Is it for *this*, that the honest habits of an industrious community are to be sacrificed? Is it for *this*, that thousands of our valuable yeomanry have been torn from their business and their homes, and driven, like herds of cattle, to the camp? Is it for *this*, that multitudes of mothers, wives and children, left to provide for themselves, have been forced to "solicit the cold hand of charity?" For *this* that our ships are rotting at our wharves? For *this* that all the metes and bounds of honourable merchandize have been lost in a polluted deluge of speculation? For *this* that our taxes are increased proportionally with the diminution of our means? For *this* that we are incumbering ourselves with a public debt, which will only be cancelled by the erasure of our name from the catalogue of nations? What! Is it for *this*, that we have incurred the guilt of remorseless, coldblooded, inhuman outrage upon a neighbouring province, by carrying fire and sword, yes, literally, *fire and sword*, into the peaceful dwellings of its innocent inhabitants? Shame! Shame! Who is an American, and does not hide his head? The hour of

midnight, the hour of darkness, of silence and repose—this is the hour to flourish the incendiary brand. Look! it is your countrymen that do the work! Newark is wrapped in flames; and age, and sex, and infancy, are driven forth into the wintry snows! It passes belief; and all for the protection of *British* seamen against the claims of their native allegiance! O, who is an American, and does not hide his head?

But I leave the particulars of the war. I will not be the historian of my country's infamy. Nor shall I attempt to mitigate your chagrin, by detailing the apologies which have been offered to relieve government from the proper odium of its measures. It is admitted that we have suffered aggravated abuses from the enemy, abuses never to be tamely borne; still there remains the fact, as mortifying as it is glaring and unquestionable, that the great plea which, during many months of ignominious warfare, has been urged for the continuance of the struggle, is substantially *untrue*. It is a plea, if I mistake not, equally disowned by law and by principle. You have often heard its fallacy exposed. It is but recently that you listened to such an exposition in this place, conducted, with an eloquence far above my reach, by a person,\* whom years and wisdom had conspired to honour, an exalted statesman from the school of better days. It only remains for us, to use the lights that we have, and keeping our eyes steadily fixed upon the perils which threaten and the evils which afflict the commonwealth, to

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\* Honourable Gouverneur Morris.

consider what may be done to arrest, if possible, the progress of its ruin.

And here, fellow citizens, I feel that I might well release your patience. If you believe, as I hope you do, that your liberties are insecure, you need not be told that you are consequently bound by every tie which their value can create, to array your best faculties in their defence. It is not a thing in your option to remain inert. You are members of a great community, which has imperious claims upon you for assiduous and energetic effort. Look no more, I beseech you, to the amiable character of your institutions, for the influence which is to preserve them; trust no more in the vulgar independence which results from your territorial wealth; sleep no more beneath your vine and fig-tree, in the conceit that you are too remote from foreign nations to have occasion for alarm. These things will never save your country; no, they will not so much as save a timber from her approaching wreck. Nor can she safely depend upon the untaught, spontaneous fidelity of the people at large. Where, then, you ask, is her hope? In you, in the pupils of WASHINGTON, in the comparatively small number of her people, who have the worth to feel, and the conscience to perform, their duty. It is in the active energies of the virtuous and enlightened few, that republics have ever found the mainspring of their help in times of trouble. You must act, fellow citizens; and you must act with vigour. But how? In the open, honourable and fearless exertion of all wise means to counterwork the several causes of your danger. Convinced of the nature of these

causes, and aware of the general maxim that in states like ours, popular sentiment is not only the common engine of evil, but also the only possible medium of great national reform, you cannot easily mistake the proper course of conduct, nor too ardently pursue it. You are required to study and to teach the principles of your political system, to ascertain and assert the rights of the citizen, to guard the limits of constitutional authority in the government, freely and fully to discuss public measures and characters, to detect intrigue, to expose folly, to chastise iniquity. The federal union cherish, as you regard yourselves and your posterity; so that when that union shall be rent, (which direful judgment Heaven avert!) you may be guiltless. On the other hand, allow me to say, you cannot well be too prompt and determined in resisting any act of magisterial aggression. Rulers have indeed the right to judge of the proper exercise of their powers. But, be it remembered, they must judge at their peril; for the people, too, the sufferers of whatever is politically suffered, have equal right to decide upon the same subject; and so far as they use due prudence and discretion in making up their opinions, it is clear, that when the thing is settled deep in their deliberate conviction, that a particular measure is unlawful and unjust, they are not only at liberty, but they are under the strongest obligation to resist. Rely upon it, if you turn your backs, usurpation will tread upon your heels. Let us face our real foes, wherever they appear. It is not an uncommon doctrine, that the war we are now waging is entitled to our support, if on no other account,

yet because it has the sanction of legislative forms. This is fine! Being in possession of a bad thing, we are to make the best of it and keep it! Having taken fire into our bosoms, we are to fold our arms over it! Are you prepared for this? We have been advised how unpatriotic it looks, in such a crisis as the present, to withhold from administration our encouragement, our substance, our lives. Look as it may, I adjure you, I adjure the American people, to put a stop to this enormous war, by withholding every thing they legally can from the desperadoes that would prolong it. Nor will it be the first time that popular coercion will have brought a mad ministry to their senses. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*. England, our enemy, has scarcely ever made a peace, but in obedience to necessities imposed by her people. The present is, indeed, an awful crisis. Never before did human affairs, throughout the earth, appear in so novel and imposing an attitude as for the last two years. It is emphatically an age of strangeness, of portent, and of horror. Every thing in motion, and every movement terrific; the bonds of national law trampled under foot; the venerable system of the balance of power annihilated; all the great districts of the christian, I might almost say, of the civilized world, sympathizing in blood; and, incited by our injuries, the savage of the forest, though in this instance latest in the strife, as if appalled by the magnificence of its desolations, has at last caught the spirit of the savages of christendom, and set his appetite for human wo. Surely, in such a time as this, honest men should unite against the powers of political darkness. It is a time, not only for prudence,

but for heroism, too ; for firm, undaunted magnanimity. And I call upon you this day, to honour the name of WASHINGTON, that first of men, by adopting his virtues, and by resolving to maintain the liberties won for you by his toil, and transmitted by his love. I call upon you this day, to take your stand upon the threshold of the federal constitution, and to repel, *at any cost*, the desperate wretch that shall attempt to violate its sanctity. I call upon you this day, and stop your ears if you can, to remember your duties to your suffering, dying country.

THE END.

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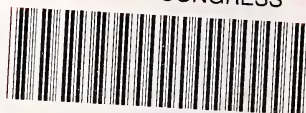
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